

' should jamb in rocks or trees. Soon he becomes thoroughly alarmed and sets off at a great pace, the log ploughing along behind him. Should a strong, vigorous young bull become attached to a rather light log, he may go twenty or thirty miles.'

COURT LEYS,
TOOT BALDONE, OXFORD.

C. G. SELIGNMAN.

NO. XI.—CROWS NESTS AND ELECTRIC CABLES

The G. I. P. Railway, since the inauguration of the new electric service in Bombay, was faced with a novel problem intimately connected with the nesting habits of the Bombay crow.

The Bombay crow on looking round for a nesting place decided that the overhead gear which carries the electric cables offered a safe and satisfactory haven in which to bring up its family. The Bombay city crow has advanced ideas in nest architecture and commonly builds itself a nest of wire or hoop iron in preference to the more common-place twigs.

Mr. R. McLean, agent, G. I. P. Railway, has very kindly forwarded us the following particulars:—

During the months of March, April, May and June 62 insulators were damaged by crows, causing a loss of 43 hours on the service; this loss was spread over 433 trains. From observations taken the trouble was usually caused by the crows either attempting to build their nests on the side strain insulator brackets, as shown in photograph No. 1 or by the crow alighting on the structure near the 'live' line with a length of wire in its beak and the wire coming in contact with live metal. The wire started an arc which, though small at first, spread to the heavier metal of the line and structure and so continued until the insulator was completely burnt down.

In one instance the Catenary Cable, 1 inch in diameter was burnt through. The crow apparently prefers metal such as wire, hoop iron, etc., to twigs for building its nest, for it was noticed that wherever such material was available, the nest was composed entirely of wire with a thin lining of straw or cocoanut fibre. The compositions of the nests varied on different sections of the line. Near Masjid (in the heart of the city), the nests were of small pieces of light hoop iron, probably brought from the metal yards in the neighbourhood. Near the Cotton Green, they were of iron wire such as is used in reinforced concrete construction. Near Kolwada in the suburbs, where no such supplies of metal were available, the nests were of twigs and were not dangerous from our point of view. Near Kurla, they were of twigs and wire.

The crows were most persistent in building on the structure where they had first chosen to build and after the nest had been taken down, returned time after time to rebuild. Early in the season they would rebuild the nest in about three days, but later the new nest would be built in a few hours.

Another interesting point noticed was that the crow did not sit in the nest at night if it was composed of wire, but roosted in a tree close at hand. The wire nests in such cases were found to be quite warm even at 2 a.m.

The statement made in the press that only one crow had fallen a victim to the power is incorrect. Twenty-nine crows were found dead at the site of accidents. They were invariably badly burnt and nearly all their feathers were charred. In two instances a crow flew away leaving its legs behind stuck to the structure as an effect of the arc.

As an emergency measure the railway decided to fix asbestos sheets over the brackets to prevent wires from resting on the 'live' 'pull-off' rod, and so far the fitting of these sheets has been entirely satisfactory.

The crow, however, not to be defeated, has now moved his habitation higher up the structure and photograph No. 2 shows a nest in the overhead girder itself. The chances of wires coming into contact with live parts of the structure are, of course, very much less in the new location, but an examination of the photograph with a magnifying glass will show the great lengths of wire that have been used in making his nest, so that the danger is by no means entirely eliminated.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
15th June, 1925.

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